

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: November 10, 2010

Meeting No.: 118

Project: Constellation Visitor's Center

Phase: Final

Location: Pier One, Inner Harbor

PRESENTATION:

Barbara Wilks, of W Architecture, presented the revisions made to the design since the last review in 2008. These included flipping the angled entrances to the roof stair towers and adding a small garden along the ramp to the entrance plinth. She also presented information regarding roof mechanical equipment (including a rendering of its visibility) as well as material samples. In particular, she shared with the Panel four different exterior wall materials that were considered, with the preferred treatment being a rain screen with horizontal wood slats.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel was very complimentary regarding the design of the visitor's center, specifically the simplicity of the design, the elegant use of materials (in particular the rain screen), and the references to the Constellation and harbor in various details and materials. However, the Panel still had a few recommendations and concerns:

Stair towers / roof. As stated in the previous minutes, the stair towers are strong formal elements and add variety and contrast to the strong rectangular shape of the building. However, the panel feels that the stair towers should be higher so that 1) they are more visible from the ground, 2) better hide the mechanical unit, and 3) resolve the odd relationship of how the railing meets the low end of the sloping forms. Further, it was recommended that the mechanical unit be lowered into the roof to diminish its height and visibility.

Plinth. The Panel had mixed reactions to the concrete plinth – some felt that it was overbearing and massive and others felt that its simplicity was in keeping with the building. The Panel agreed, however, that additional attention be given to the plinth and its detailing. Recommendations included incorporating wood segments along the edge to serve as seating, considering how to deter skateboarders, and whether granite or another material should be used to better relate to the pier. The design team was also asked to look at the West Shore Park and area around the Visitor's Center to see if there were particular details or materials that might be used.

Kal Wall. The Panel had concerns with how the kal wall would be detailed on the exposed stair towers, given that the material is in panels and the intention of the design is to create solid forms.

PANEL ACTION:

Final Approval with comments.

Attending:

Chris Rowsom – Historic Ships in Baltimore
Barbara Wilks, Nick Koster – W Architecture

Ms. Eig; Messrs Bowden, Ramberg, Britt and Cameron – Panel
Gary Cole, Anthony Cataldo, Alex Hoffman, Bob Quilter - Planning